

The Prairie Light Review

Volume 35 | Number 2

Article 10

Spring 5-1-2013

Degree Dearest

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Recommended Citation

O'Dwyer, Kelli (2013) "Degree Dearest," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 35: No. 2, Article 10.
Available at: <http://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol35/iss2/10>

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Kelli O'Dwyer

You're the only one anyone asks for,
the only one anyone cares for.
They don't come running to see me,
to see my bruised and beaten,
 ripped and riven,
 sides and pages.

Oh they look at you,
All clean and pristine edges,
calm and collected font.
Do you show the story?

The peanut butter smears,
from the project that devoured his entire weekend.
The puckers from tears,
from her late night breakdown when I was her only friend.

No, you just get all the glory.

Your flimsy, flaky sheet,
under your nice clean, plastic finish.
You validate they finished,
You are all anyone cares about.

Not anything written on my pages.

The poetry.
The points of a presentation.
The prose.
The persuasion.

None of it.

Not a single period
of *their own* punctuation counts.

No, you teach them that only the destination is what counts.

And me, the notebook,
 every bit the *only* evidence of the process,
 is useless.

After graduation day, I'm thrown away.